February 25, 2022 - REV

The Honorable Henry I. Stern, Chair
Senate Natural Resources & Water Committee
1021 O Street, Room 3220
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 865 (Dodd) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Stern:

The undersigned wildlife conservation organizations are pleased to strongly support SB 865 (Dodd), legislation which would extend the age eligibility to acquire a California junior hunting license from 15 years of age and under to 17 years of age and under.

For decades, the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) has administered programs aimed at providing hunting and fishing access and opportunities, including "Fishing in the City," hunter education courses, the Shared Habitat for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Program and others. Although these efforts have been successful in many ways, they have failed to reverse the decline in participation and associated conservation and revenue benefits of hunting and fishing. To further address this concern, DFW recently partnered with leaders in the conservation community in an effort called the "Hunting and Fishing Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation (R3) Program." The goal of this effort is to identify barriers to participation in these activities and to develop a plan to address those barriers. Two of the barriers identified which impact the ability of youth, especially for the poor and disadvantaged people of color, to participate in hunting activities are cost and limited opportunity.

SB 865 would take a large step towards addressing both of these concerns. A junior hunting license offers young people the opportunity to participate in numerous high quality "apprentice" hunting activities offered by DFW and nonprofit wildlife conservation groups. By increasing the age eligibility of a junior license, SB 865 would allow youth to take advantage of these exciting outdoor opportunities for two more years – significantly increasing the likelihood they will

become lifelong participants in hunting activities. Further, with the cost of a California junior hunting license offered at a significantly lower price ($14.04) than an adult hunting license ($52.66), SB 865 will make hunting much more affordable for many families.

In addition, by increasing the junior hunting license age eligibility to 17 years of age and younger, SB 865 would bring hunting licenses in line with California law which generally deems someone as an "adult" at 18 years. Further, in 2016 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service increased the age eligibility for youth waterfowl hunts from 15 to 17 years of age.

By increasing the eligible age for holding a junior hunting license from 15 years of age and under to 17 years of age and under, SB 865 would allow and encourage more of California's youth and their families to step outdoors and appreciate and support our wildlife and their habitats. For all the above reasons, we urge your strong support of SB 865 when the bill comes before your Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee on Tuesday, March 8th.

Sincerely,

Keely Hopkins, Western States Coordinator
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Fred Harpster, President
Black Brant Group

Gary F. Brennan, President
San Diego County Wildlife Federation

Lori Jacobs, President
California Houndsmen for Conservation

James Stone, President
Nor-Cal Guides & Sportsmen's Association

Roy Griffith, Legislative Director
California Rifle & Pistol Association

Steve Chappell, Executive Director
Suisun Resource Conservation District

Mark Hennelly, V. P. of Government Relations
California Waterfowl Association

Devin O'Dea, California Chapter Coordinator
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

Adam Chavez, President
California Hawking Club

Chriss Bowles, President
California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association

Cathie Nelson, President
San Francisco Bay Area Chapter - Safari Club International

Dawnita Harwood, President
California State Chapter – National Wild Turkey Federation

Steve Miller, President
Tulare Basin Wetlands Association

cc: The Honorable Senator Bill Dodd
         Members, Senate Natural Resources & Water Committee